UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.17/1993/5
1 June 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
First session
14-25 June 1993
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

ADOPTION OF A MULTI-YEAR THEMATIC PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE COMMISSION

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 12 of its resolution 47/191 on institutional arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, recommended that the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its first substantive session, adopt a multi-year thematic programme of work that would provide a framework to assess progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 1/ and ensure an integrated approach to all of its environment and development components as well as linkages between sectoral and cross-sectoral issues. The programme could consist of clusters that would integrate in an effective manner related sectoral and cross-sectoral components of Agenda 21, in such a way as to allow the Commission to review progress in the implementation of the entire Agenda 21 by 1997. That programme of work could be adjusted, as the need arose, at subsequent sessions of the Commission. In paragraph 13 of the same resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to submit his proposals for such a programme of work during the organizational session of the Commission.

2. At that organizational session, held from 24 to 26 February 1993, the Commission took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the outline of a multi-year thematic programme of its work (E/CN.17/1993/2) and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a draft programme for consideration and adoption by the Commission at its first substantive session, taking into account comments and views expressed in the Commission during its organizational session.

I. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

3. The Commission also decided that the programme of work should be based on an integrated approach to environment and development, taking full account of the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 2/ and all other aspects of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 47/191, and should also reflect the cross-linkages between and among sectoral and cross-sectoral components of Agenda 21.

4. The General Assembly, in paragraph 4 of its resolution 47/191, recommended that the Commission should:

(a) Promote the incorporation of the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in the implementation of Agenda 21;

(b) Promote the incorporation of the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests 3/ in the implementation of Agenda 21, in particular in the context of the review of the implementation of Chapter 11 thereof;

(c) Keep under review the implementation of Agenda 21, recognizing that it was a dynamic programme that could evolve over time, taking into account the agreement to review Agenda 21 in 1997, and make recommendations, as appropriate,

on the need for new cooperative arrangements related to sustainable development to the Economic and Social Council, and through it, to the General Assembly.

II. REVIEW OF CLUSTERS

5. At its organizational session, the Commission recommended that it should consider the following clusters, which are broadly cross-sectoral in nature, on an annual basis, with a particular emphasis on certain chapters of Agenda 21, within each cluster, as appropriate:

(a) Critical elements of sustainability;

(b) Financial resources and mechanisms;

(c) Education, science, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cooperation and capacity-building;

(d) Decision-making structures;

(e) Roles of major groups.

6. The Commission further recommended that the following clusters, which are broadly sectoral in nature, should be considered by the Commission on a multi-year basis:

(f) Health, human settlements and fresh water;

(g) Land, desertification, forests and biodiversity;

(h) Atmosphere, oceans and all kinds of seas;

(i) Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes.

7. In paragraph (b) of its decision on issues relating to the future work of the Commission, regarding sources of information relevant to the thematic reviews of Agenda 21, the Commission stated that it would decide, in preparing the agendas of its forthcoming sessions, which reports were to be considered from all relevant organs, organizations, programmes and institutions of the United Nations system, as well as international financial institutions, including the Global Environment Facility, and the links with these bodies, including the expert advice from the High-level Advisory Board presented by the Secretary-General. The Commission might also wish to take account of such additional matters as progress in the following:

(a) The aim for each country to prepare national capacity-building plans for sustainable development, if possible by 1994 (paragraph 37.4 of Agenda 21);

(b) Implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(c) Review by the United Nations system of its educational programmes, encompassing training and public awareness (paragraph 36.5 (g) of Agenda 21);

(d) Compiling, updating and developing compatible safety procedures into a framework of internationally agreed principles as a basis for guidelines to be applied on safety in biotechnology (paragraph 16.32 (c) of Agenda 21);

(e) Work of the proposed intergovernmental forum on chemical use assessment and management (paragraph 19.76 of Agenda 21).

8. In paragraph (c) of the same decision, the Commission stated that it would determine ways to consider reports and contributions from entities outside the United Nations system, including non-governmental organizations.

III. RELATED FORTHCOMING EVENTS

9. The Commission requested the Secretary-General, in formulating proposals for a programme of work for consideration by the Commission, to take into account the calendar of major forthcoming intergovernmental meetings, negotiating processes and international decades in the economic, social and related fields, such as those related to:

(a) Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, which is expected to be finalized by an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, to convene in Paris, 6-17 June 1994;

(b) Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994;

(c) United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, to be held at United Nations Headquarters, 19-30 July 1993;

(d) International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo, 5-13 September 1994;

(e) World Summit for Social Development, to be held in Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995;

(f) Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in Beijing, 4-15 September 1995;

(g) United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in Turkey, 4-13 June 1996;

(h) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction;

as well as any recommended follow-up activities associated with the above-mentioned events.

10. The Secretary-General considers that in determining its programme of work the Commission might, inter alia, also wish to take account of the following intergovernmental events:

(a) The World Conference on Human Rights to be held in Vienna, 14-25 June 1993.

(b) The Council meeting of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade on the follow-up to UNCED, to be held in Geneva in November 1993.

IV. POSSIBLE SCHEDULING OF SECTORAL REVIEWS

11. It is suggested that the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 programme areas under the clusters should start in 1994. With a three-year schedule for the sectoral clusters, all areas could be covered by 1996. This would free the 1997 session of the Commission to undertake an overall review of the implementation of Agenda 21, with a view to preparing for the special session of the General Assembly envisaged in Assembly resolution 47/190.

12. Taking into account the timing of the related events detailed in paragraphs 9 and 10 above, it is suggested that a possible sequence for consideration of the broadly sectoral clusters might be as follows:

1994	F.	Health, human settlements and freshwater
	I.	Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes
1995	G.	Land, desertification, forests and biodiversity
1996	H.	Atmosphere, oceans and all kinds of seas

V. PROGRAMME OF WORK

13. In the light of the above, a draft multi-year thematic programme of work is attached for consideration by the Commission at its first substantive session. Since the decision by the Commission refers to the need to focus on a few specific chapters of Agenda 21 in each cluster, a suggested focus for the cross-sectoral chapters, within clusters to be considered annually, is indicated. Although the work programme has been organized in terms of chapters, it may be appropriate to take into account all closely related programme areas in other chapters as well. The Commission may of course take up any emerging issue in any other chapter even if it is not scheduled for the year, if the circumstances so require.

14. As for clusters D (Decision-making structures) and E (Major groups), the Commission may decide that although as a rule these two clusters would be included in the programme on an annual basis, they would be considered only in their relationship to other clusters under consideration. At the same time, once the 1994-1996 period is under way each of them will be considered separately in a more comprehensive manner.

15. The suggested programme of work up to 1997 is outlined below:

(a) 1994 Session:

(i) Review of cross-sectoral clusters A (with particular reference to chapters 2 and 4); B; C (with particular reference to chapters 34 and 37); D (with particular reference to chapters 38 and 39); and E;

(ii) Review of sectoral clusters, first phase:

F. Health, human settlements and freshwater (chapters 6, 7, 18 and 21);

I. Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes (chapters 19, 20 and 22);

(b) 1995 Session:

(i) Review of cross-sectoral clusters A (with particular reference to chapters 3 and 5); B; C (with particular reference to chapters 16, 34 and 35); D (with particular reference to chapters 8 and 40); and E;

(ii) Review of sectoral clusters, second phase:

G. Land, desertification, forests and biodiversity (chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15);

(c) 1996 Session:

(i) Review of cross-sectoral clusters A; B; C (with particular reference to chapters 34, 36, 37); D; and E;

(ii) Review of sectoral clusters, third phase:

H. Atmosphere, oceans and all kinds of seas (chapters 9 and 17);

(d) 1997 Session:

Overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21 in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly in 1997.

16. These proposals are intended to stimulate further ideas to enable the programme of work to be shaped as precisely as possible to the wishes of the Commission. They are also intended to enable a rational, systematic and coherent approach to the assessment in terms of measurable progress made since UNCED. The proposals have been designed to facilitate the framing of recommendations, especially on urgent and emerging major issues to be addressed in the course of the high-level meeting of the Commission, with particular

reference to the need to assist the Commission to focus as clearly as possible upon its priorities and the strategic direction of its future work.

17. In drawing up his proposals, the Secretary-General has taken careful note of the recommendations of the Commission at its organizational session regarding the clusters to be considered as the basis for its programme of work. The Secretary-General has also taken note of the discussion which took place at the organizational session of the many different factors affecting the scheduling of its work. In submitting his proposals, therefore, the Secretary-General wishes to reiterate that they are intended neither to be prescriptive nor to limit possible options.

18. In this context, the Commission might also wish to give further consideration to matters such as:

(a) How a continuous and meaningful assessment of progress towards sustainable development might most effectively be made by the Commission. One possibility that has been raised (see E/CN.17/1993/2) might be to develop realistic, usable and easily understandable indicators;

(b) How the review process might best be utilized as a major stocktaking, in order to avoid duplication and overlap with existing programmatic efforts, and as a way to generate new ideas. This would appear to be of particular importance, given paragraph 4 (c) of General Assembly resolution 47/191, which recognizes Agenda 21 as a dynamic programme that could evolve over time, taking account of the agreement to review Agenda 21 in 1997.

VI. CONCLUSION

19. The Commission, at its first substantive session, is invited to consider and adopt the draft multi-year thematic programme of work presented in the annex to this document and summarized in paragraph 15 above.

Annex

DRAFT MULTI-YEAR THEMATIC PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE COMMISSION

I. AGENDA 21 CLUSTERS AS RECOMMENDED AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

A. Critical elements of sustainability

1. International cooperation to accelerate sustainable development in developing countries and related domestic policies (chapter 2).

2. Combating poverty (chapter 3).

3. Changing consumption patterns (chapter 4).

4. Demographic dynamics and sustainability (chapter 5).

B. Financial resources and mechanisms

1. Financial resources and mechanisms (chapter 33).

C. Education, science, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cooperation and capacity-building

1. Environmentally sound management of biotechnology (chapter 16).

2. Transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation and capacity-building (chapter 34).

3. Science for sustainable development (chapter 35).

4. Promoting education, public awareness and training (chapter 36).

5. National mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building in developing countries (chapter 37).

D. Decision-making structures

1. Integrating environment and development in decision-making (chapter 8).

2. International institutional arrangements (chapter 38).

3. International legal instruments and mechanisms (chapter 39).

4. Information for decision-making (chapter 40).

E. Roles of major groups

1. Preamble to section III on strengthening the role of major groups (chapter 23).

2. Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development (chapter 24).

3. Children and youth in sustainable development (chapter 25).

4. Recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities (chapter 26).

5. Strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations: partners for sustainable development (chapter 27).

6. Local authorities' initiatives in support of Agenda 21 (chapter 28).

7. Strengthening the role of workers and their trade unions (chapter 29).

8. Strengthening the role of business and industry (chapter 30).

9. Scientific and technological community (chapter 31).

10. Strengthening the role of farmers (chapter 32).

F. Health, human settlements and freshwater

1. Protecting and promoting human health (chapter 6).

2. Promoting sustainable human settlement development (chapter 7).

3. Protection of the quality and supply of freshwater resources, application of integrated approaches to the development, management and use of water resources (chapter 18).

4. Environmentally sound management of solid wastes and sewage-related issues (chapter 21).

G. Land, desertification, forests and biodiversity

1. Integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources (chapter 10).

2. Combating deforestation (chapter 11).

3. Managing fragile ecosystems: combating desertification and drought (chapter 12).

4. Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development (chapter 13.)

5. Promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development (chapter 14).

6. Conservation of biological diversity (chapter 15).

H. Atmosphere, oceans and all kinds of seas

1. Protection of the atmosphere (chapter 9).

2. Protection of the oceans, all kinds of seas including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and coastal areas and their protection, rational use and development of their living resources (chapter 17).

I. Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes

1. Environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals, including prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products (chapter 19).

2. Environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, including prevention of illegal international traffic in hazardous wastes (chapter 20).

3. Safe and environmentally sound management of radioactive wastes (chapter 22).

II. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK

1993 Session

Adoption of a multi-year thematic programme of work (item 2 of the provisional agenda).

1994 Session

Review of cross-sectoral clusters:

A. Critical elements of sustainability

With particular reference to chapters 2 and 4.

B. Financial resources and mechanisms

Chapter 33.

C. Education, science, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cooperation and capacity-building

With particular reference to chapters 34 and 37.

D. Decision-making structures

With particular reference to chapters 38 and 39.

E. Roles of major groups

Chapters 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

Review of sectoral clusters, first phase:

F. Health, human settlements and freshwater

Chapters 6, 7, 18 and 21.

I. Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes

Chapters 19, 20 and 22.

1995 Session

Review of cross-sectoral clusters:

A. Critical elements of sustainability

With particular reference to chapters 3 and 5.

B. Financial resources and mechanisms

Chapter 33.

C. Education, science, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cooperation and capacity-building

With particular reference to chapters 16, 34 and 35.

D. Decision-making structures

With particular reference to chapters 8 and 40.

E. Roles of major groups

Chapters 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

Review of sectoral clusters, second phase:

G. Land, desertification, forests and biodiversity

Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

1996 Session

Review of cross-sectoral clusters:

A. Critical elements of sustainability

Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5.

B. Financial resources and mechanisms

Chapter 33

C. Education, science, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cooperation and capacity-building

With particular reference to chapters 34, 36 and 37.

D. Decision-making structures

Chapters 8, 38, 39, 40.

E. Roles of major groups

Chapters 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32:

Review of sectoral clusters, third phase.

H. Atmosphere, oceans and all kinds of seas

Chapters 9 and 17.

1997 Session

Overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21 in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly in 1997 envisaged in resolution 47/190.

Notes

1/ See Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8), resolution 1, annex II.

2/ Ibid., resolution 1, annex I.

3/ Ibid., resolution 1, annex III.